



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

REPRESENTATIVE SUSAN M. JOHNSON
FORTY-NINTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING ROOM 4029
HOME: 860-423-2085
CAPITOL: 860-240-8585
TOLL FREE: 800-842-8267
FAX: 860-240-0206
E-MAIL: Susan.Johnson@cga.ct.gov

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HOUSING COMMITTEE

March 1, 2022

Chairman Abercrombie and Chairman Moore, Ranking Members and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee I am Representative Susan Johnson. I represent the 49th House District of Windham which includes Willimantic. Thank you for raising Senate Bill 197 An Act Concerning the Temporary Assistance [for needy] Families.

This is a very important bill to people in my community and communities all over the State of Connecticut that provide low-income housing opportunities and homeless shelters. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) provided coverage for families in poverty. There was no work requirement until the youngest child was in grade school. In 1996 TANF replaced AFDC on the federal level limiting access to benefits for needy families to 60 months. Soon thereafter the Rowland Administration limited the coverage in Connecticut to 21 months in a lifetime with a few minor exceptions.

The TANF 21-month support limitation to needy women and children in Connecticut has caused an increase in our homeless population. This policy change occurred a few years after towns like Windham lost manufacturing. These manufacturing jobs kept people employed with enough pay so families could meet their basic needs. The consequence of lost lower skill manufacturing jobs combined with lost support from TANF after 21 months has created a generation of homeless women and children. For the record, Windham has a population of less than 25,000 people. Despite our small population we now have three shelters for the homeless. Windham also has more subsidize housing per capita than any other Connecticut town except Hartford.

Providing more support to impoverished women and children will help the children do better in school. Homeless children are traumatized by the loss of a place to live. A few years ago the Public Health Committee required educators to learn the signs and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as there is an increase in mental illness in children due to poverty and homelessness. The cut in care for poor families shifted the burden onto our local school districts and police departments. The state has a moral and practical responsibility to help mothers and children grow into functional participants in our economy. Connecticut's TANF program does just the opposite of what was intended by Congress it is the second worst program in the nation for needy families second only to Arizona.

We are in a complex economy with jobs that require academic or technical training. Our manufacturing today is high tech and requires knowledge of advanced math. Jobs that never required training back in the day like nurses' aides now require training and certificates. This isn't done for free. Obtaining the knowledge to work in today's economy takes time. Parents trying to obtain some training to work in this economy need childcare and the resources to complete the necessary training. Our social welfare programs just do not give impoverished families a chance. Connecticut is one of the highest cost states in which to live yet the TANF program provides only 30% of the federal poverty standard determined on a nationwide basis. Please help our local communities help impoverished families, mostly women and children, become functional members of our economy extend the TANF program to families for the full 60 months.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted, Rep Susan Johnson

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" and last name "Johnson" clearly distinguishable.

Representative Susan Johnson
49th Assembly District